

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KATHMA 03431 181429Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-01
INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-15 TRSE-00 XMB-04 OPIC-06
SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05 SS-15 STR-04
CEA-01 L-03 H-02 PA-02 PRS-01 AGRE-00 /098 W
-----083224 181450Z /45

R 180935Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

UNCLAS KATHMANDU 3431

ROMEFOR FODAG FAO/EWS

E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: EAGR, EARL, NP
SUBJ: NEPAL HARVEST PROSPECTS

REF: A) ROME 12712
B) KATHMANDU 2493

1. MONSOON RAINFALL IN NEPAL THIS YEAR HAS UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN
SOMEWHAT DEFICIENT TO DATE, HOWEVER FAO REPORT QUOTED VIA REF (A)
MAY BE UNDULY ALARMIST IN THE CONTEXT OF THE VERY
LIMITED HARD INFORMATIONS SO FAR AVAILABLE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT
THE FAO REPORTS IS BASED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON INFORMATION RECEIVED
FROM ONE GON AGENCY - THE FOOD & AGRICULTURAL MARKETING DEPARTMENT
OF THE FOOD, AGRICULTURE & IRRIGATION MINISTRY. REPORTS BEING
ISSUED BY THIS DEPARTMENT APPEAR TO BE QUANTITATIVE AT FIRST GLANCE,
BUT ARE BASED ON QUESTIONABLE DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND CON-
SIDERABLE OVER-GENERALIZATION. IN CONTRAST, THE AGRICULTURE
DEPARTMENT STILL SEEMS TO BE QUITE RELAXED ABOUT THE SITUATION
AND THE GOVERNMENT IS CONTINUING TO EXPORT RICE FROM CURRENT
STOCKS.

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2. COMPREHENSIVE COUNTRYWIDE INFORMATION IS SIMPLY NOT
AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, FROM SCATTERED REPORTS, THE GENERAL
IMPRESSION GAINED IS THTT THROUGHOUT THE TERA I IN GENERAL
RAINFALL TO DATE HAS BEEN DFICIIENT BUT NOT CRITICALLY
SO, EXCEPT FOR THE CENTRAL EASTERN SECTOR (FROM BARA TO
SIRAHA DISTRICTS) WHERE RAINFALL HAS BEEN ONLY 25 TO 50PCT

OF NORMAL. IN THE HILLS ALSO, RAINFALL HAS BEEN LIGHTER THAN NORMAL, NOTABLY IN SOME SPOTS IN THE EAST, BUT AS THE PRIMARY HILL CROP IS MAIZE, THE NET EFFECT OF THIS MAY ACTUALLY BE POSITIVE. MUCH OF THE CUMULATIVE RAINFALL DEFICIT WAS DUE TO DELAYED AND SPOTTY ONSET OF THE MONSOON IN JUNE. A GON METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF JULY SHOWS NEAR NORMAL RAINFALL FOR NEARLY ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY EXCEPT FOR THE CENTRAL EASTERN TERAI AND THE SPARSELY POPULATED NORTHERN BORDER AREAS. THUS, ALTHOUGH THE LATE MONSOON DELAYED RICE PLANTING IN MANY AREAS, IT WILL HAVE CAUSED MINIMAL PERMANENT DAMAGE IF ITS PRESENT STRENGTH CONTINUES TO HOLD UP.

3. THE CURRENT PICTURE COULD STILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY CHANGED - EITHER FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE - BY MONSOON PERFORMANCE THROUGH THE REST OF AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER. HOWEVER FROM PRESENT CONDITIONS IT APPEARS TO US THAT AT WORST THERE MIGHT BE A SIGNIFICANT BUT NOT CRITICAL REDUCTION IN THE RICE IN THE TERAI AS A WHOLE, AND A FEW LIMITED PROBLEM AREAS IN THE HILLS. AS THE TERAI IS NORMALLY A SUBSTANTIAL SURPLUS AREA, THE PRIMARY OVERALL EFFECT MAY BE A REDUCTION OF EXPORTABLE SURPLUSES. COUNTRYWIDE FOOD AVAILABILITY MIGHT BE TIGHT BUT NOT CRITICAL, WITH INTERNAL DISTRIBUTION OF AVAILABLE STOCKS A MORE VITAL ISSUE THAN THE QUESTION OF FOOD IMPORTS FROM THE OUTSIDE.
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